

LINDA PASTAN

Crimes

*“Si trattava di sentire le cose e disporle
nell’unico posto ad esse riservato.*

Come scrivere versi, appunto.”

—from *Sempre Caro* by Marcello Fois

When the Italian poet/detective
tells us that writing a poem
is the same as solving a crime,
I know what he means.

Each line is a piece of a jigsaw
waiting to fit in a stanza: the scarlet
curve of a witness’s smile or an edge
of blue lake where the body was found.

And every iamb
is searching for justice.
“The right words find themselves
without knowing how,” we’re told.

The narrators all are unreliable—
criminals inventing
their perfect alibis, poets
lying in order to tell the truth.

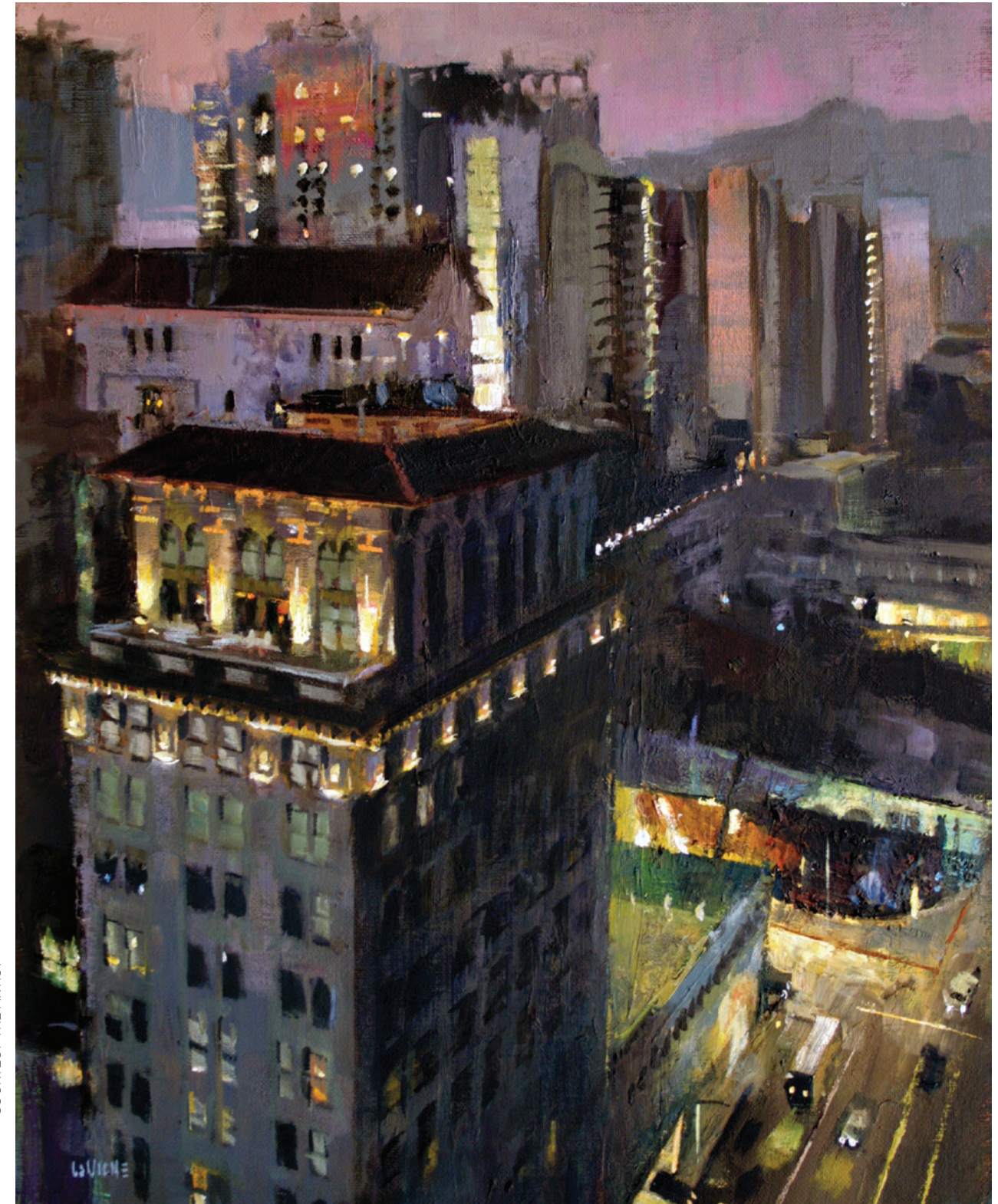
And each partial metaphor,
like a good investigator, searches
for its other half—the clue
that explains everything.

Solving a crime,
you may argue, is often
a matter of life or death.
Exactly, I answer.

Linda Pastan’s fourteenth book of poems, *Insomnia*, was published in October of 2015 and won the Towson University Prize for Literature. She has twice been a finalist for the National Book Award, and in 2003 she won the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize for lifetime achievement. *A Dog Runs Through It* is due in May 2018.

DANLA VIGNE

The Drop, 2016
Oil on canvas, 16 x 20 in



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